

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC ACCESS IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

In the 35 years since BCDC was created, public access to the shoreline expanded significantly from approximately 4 miles in 1965 to over 200 miles today, with more public access being added each year. Demand for public access continues due to an increasing Bay Area population and the desirability of shoreline access experiences. Furthermore, there is a demand for a diversity of access experiences, including both along urban waterfronts and in more natural areas.

The character of shoreline public access areas is determined largely by the nature and intensity of surrounding land uses. For example in the intensively developed areas of the most populous cities of San Francisco and Oakland, the shoreline edge is typically a hard edge with fairly intensive development at the shoreline and access areas provided primarily for active and passive recreation and periodic large civic events and celebrations. In some of the smaller towns and cities around the Bay, smaller intensively developed shoreline areas provide similar recreational areas as larger cities, while in many towns, lower intensity residential and commercial uses may front on the shoreline with a softer sometimes natural shoreline edge improved for primarily passive recreation. This variety creates a rich mosaic of shoreline open spaces that accommodate widely varying types and intensities of use, ranging from thousands of visitors at some locations on a given day, to few to none per day at other sites.

Federal, state, county and local agencies, a regional park district, as well as private landowners and land trusts, are the primary providers of publicly accessible shoreline open spaces around San Francisco Bay. The different missions and goals of the open space providers determine the size, character, uses and level of improvement for each of the types of public access. Through its permit program, the Commission ensures that these shoreline open space areas maximize public access to the Bay shoreline, consistent with its mandate to preserve and protect wildlife.

The federal government has preserved several thousand acres of Bayfront lands as park, recreation, and natural areas for varying purposes. The Golden Gate National Recreation Area under the management of the National Park Service provides large developed and natural, open space areas that accommodate a wide variety of public recreation and provide scenic value. Utilizing closed federal facilities, including military bases and a closed island penitentiary the Park Service has created a mixture of intensively used urban open spaces for active and passive recreation such as the Presidio and Alcatraz Island, and more natural, passive recreation areas such as the Marin Headlands and Muir Woods. Other closed federal facilities may provide opportunities for public access in the future (e.g., the Point Molate naval fuel depot on the Richmond shoreline). The Department of the Interior, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) manages the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Both refuges are working aggressively to expand by acquiring additional lands and conducting large habitat restoration projects. The refuges provide access to large, undeveloped tracts of primarily salt ponds and tidal and seasonal marsh lands and shallow open waters areas.

The State of California, through several agencies, has provided significant shoreline areas for recreation and natural resource protection throughout the Bay. The State Parks Department manages four shoreline parks, including one island park for primarily

passive and some active recreation. The Department of Fish and Game has extensive land holdings in the North Bay, Suisun Bay and San Mateo counties, managed primarily as habitat areas for improving wildlife resources and for hunting. The California Coastal Conservancy works in partnership with local governments, other public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private landowners to purchase, protect, restore, and enhance coastal resources, and to provide access to the shore. The Coastal Conservancy improves public access to the coast and bay shores by acquiring land and easements and by building trails and stairways.

The East Bay Regional Park District operates 50 parks and 20 trails totaling more than 75,000 acres providing for a variety of passive and active recreation as well as protecting and enhancing the natural resources of its lands. The nine counties and 46 cities that front on San Francisco Bay have created several county and city parks of varying size accommodating a wide variety of recreational activities as well as for wildlife habitat protection.

Local governments provide parks and open space for public access.

Private land owners, including Commission permittees who provide public access to and along the shoreline of their lands as part of shoreline development and private wildlife organizations and land trusts also contribute significantly to the shoreline open space inventory. Wildlife organizations and land trusts own and manage lands primarily for wildlife, but also allow some passive wildlife viewing.

The Bay Trail Project. In 1987, then-state Senator Bill Lockyer authored Senate Bill 100 (SB 100) authorizing the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) to "develop and adopt a plan ... for a continuous recreational corridor which will extend around the perimeter of San Francisco and San Pablo Bays." SB 100 required that the plan include a specific trail route; the relationship of the route to parks and other recreational facilities; links to existing and proposed public transportation facilities; an implementation and funding program for the trail; and provisions for implementing the trail without adversely affecting the natural environment of the bay.

The San Francisco Bay Trail Project, a nonprofit organization administered by ABAG, was created in 1990 to plan, promote and advocate implementation of the Bay Trail. To carry out its mission, the Bay Trail Project makes available grant funds for trail construction and maintenance; participates in planning efforts and encourages consistency with the adopted Bay Trail Plan; educates the public decision-makers about the merits and benefits of the Bay Trail; produces maps and other materials to publicize the existence of the Bay Trail; and disseminates information about progress on its development. (However, the Bay Trail Project does not own land or construct trail segments; instead segments are built, owned, managed and maintained by cities, counties, park districts and other agencies with land-management responsibilities, often in partnership with local nonprofit organizations, citizens' groups or businesses.)

When complete, the Bay Trail will be a continuous 400-mile recreational corridor that will encircle the entire Bay Area, connecting communities to each other and to the Bay. It will link the shorelines of all nine counties in the Bay Area and 47 of its cities. To date, approximately 215 miles of the Bay Trail, or slightly more than half its ultimate length, has been developed.